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16 December 2008

Dr D Olukoshi  
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Dear Dr Olukoshi

Ofsted survey inspection programme – narrowing the gap in literacy and numeracy

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 8-9 December 2008 to look at work in literacy and numeracy.

As outlined in the initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of literacy and numeracy, my visit had a particular focus on how effectively the school is narrowing the gap for students at risk of not reaching the expected level of attainment for their age. The visit also evaluated the level of expertise within the school to support students with learning English as an additional language.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to our national evaluation and reporting. Published reports are likely to list the names of the contributing institutions but individual institutions will not be identified in the main text. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included interviews with senior managers and students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of eleven lessons and visits to registration and other settings.

The overall effectiveness in narrowing the gap for students at risk of not reaching the expected level of attainment for their age in literacy and numeracy was judged to be outstanding.

#### Achievement and standards

Achievement in literacy and numeracy is good. Standards are broadly average. The achievement of students working below the expected level of attainment for their age is outstanding.

- Lower attaining students come into the school working at levels that are well below the national average but achieve broadly average levels of attainment by the time they leave at the end of Year 11.
- Lower attaining boys in particular make excellent progress during their time in the school.
- The proportion of students who were below the expected level in English and mathematics at the start of Year 7, but were in line with the national average by the end of Year 9, has risen significantly over the last three years.
- By the end of Key Stage 4, the proportion of students who achieve five or more A\* to C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics is broadly average.
- The proportion of students who achieve five or more A\* to G grade at GCSE is significantly above the national average.
- All students have achieved at least one pass at GCSE in the last three years.

### Quality of teaching and learning of literacy and numeracy

The quality of teaching and learning for students working below the expected level of attainment for their age is good.

- All teachers have a strong focus on literacy and numeracy in their lesson planning and teaching. In mathematics and science, teachers reinforce key words well, for example through games. In the best lessons teachers draw attention to words that have different meanings in different subject contexts such as 'volume' and 'region' although not all teachers check routinely that students understand the meaning of non-subject specific words in texts.
- Most lessons are characterised by high expectations, particularly for lower attaining students. They are given appropriate challenges and the pace of the lessons ensures they do not fall behind.
- Relationships between teachers and students are very good. Students know that teachers give freely of their time to support and challenge them.
- Lower attaining students benefit from small group sizes where they are engaged in practical activities, or through visits that give them direct experience to talk and write about.
- Students know what they need to do to achieve a higher level but the quality of the written feedback they receive through marking is variable.
- The role of support staff does not feature routinely in lesson planning and they are not always deployed with a specific focus.

## Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum for students working below the expected level of attainment for their age is good.

- Lower attaining students benefit from the additional time they have been allocated for English and mathematics at Key Stage 3.
- Students are given numerous opportunities to use information and communication technology (ICT) for themselves which is supporting their literacy and numeracy development.
- There is a range of after school clubs in English and mathematics targeted at lower attaining students. Students enjoy these activities even more than their lessons because of the focus on fun, enjoyment and practical activities.
- Where students are placed in sets, according to National Curriculum sub-levels, the teaching is focussed on the specific needs of the group.
- Registration time is used effectively to support students' literacy and numeracy through short practical activities and games.
- Literacy and numeracy skills are planned across all curriculum subjects, for example through the development of skim reading skills in science and the use of graphs and grid references in RE.
- Not all lower attaining students receive their full curriculum entitlement to study a modern foreign language at Key Stage 3.

## Leadership and management of literacy and numeracy

The leadership and management of provision for students working below the expected level of attainment for their age are outstanding.

- The ethos throughout the school is high aspirations for all.
- Lower attaining students benefit from consistent approaches to behaviour and work.
- The needs of all groups of students are acknowledged and the school works hard to ensure they are met.
- Senior managers and leaders have invested heavily in small groups and additional curriculum time for lower attaining students to give them every opportunity to close the attainment gap with their peers nationally.
- Well qualified and dedicated staff are deployed to groups where lower attaining students are placed.
- Data is used well to track how well students are doing and to set aspirational targets.
- Levels of attendance are very high. Senior leaders have established a safe and secure environment where students want to come to school.
- Communication throughout the school is of a high quality although the school has taken insufficient account of the views of all students concerning provision for modern foreign languages at Key Stage.

## English as an additional language

The level of expertise within the school to support students with learning English as an additional language is outstanding.

- The English as an additional language coordinator is well qualified, experienced and knowledgeable.
- Information on the background and needs of students who speak English as an additional language is used accurately by teachers to plan for their next steps in lessons.
- Members of the English as an additional language department work well in partnership with subject teachers to provide appropriate and very effective support for these learners.
- Assessment of National Curriculum English is used well to track what learners of English as an additional language have achieved.

## Inclusion

Inclusion of students working below the expected levels of attainment for their age is outstanding.

- Brampton Manor is a very inclusive school where lower attaining students make significant progress during their time in school.
- Students confirm that they feel safe and secure from any form of oppressive behaviour.
- Lower attaining students have a tailored English and mathematics provision which enables them to catch up rapidly.
- The needs of groups of learners or individuals are met very well.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring that lower attaining students in Key Stage 3 receive their entitlement to study a modern foreign language
- sharing the best examples of marking more widely through the school so that students receive high quality written feedback more consistently.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop literacy and numeracy in the school.

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Mark Sims  
Her Majesty's Inspector